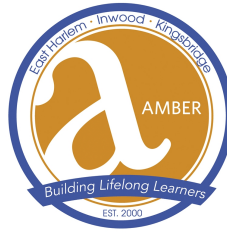


APPROVED



# Amber Charter Schools

## Minutes

### May Board Meeting

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#### Date and Time

Wednesday May 14, 2025 at 6:00 PM

#### Location

Inwood Elementary Campus: 532 W 215th St, New York, NY 10034

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#### Trustees Present

Brad Olsen, John Gutierrez, Khiera Pena, Li'Esha Garcia, Lindsay Marino Long, Luina Munoz-BlueSpruce, Robyn Epps, Soledad Hiciano, Timothy Day

#### Trustees Absent

Amador Centeno, Kim Ramos, Miguelina German

#### Guests Present

Christine Ganey, Emily Griffin, Kirsys Gomez, Sashemani Elliott, Veronica Almedina

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### I. Opening Items

#### A. Record Attendance

#### B. Call the Meeting to Order

Soledad Hiciano called a meeting of the board of trustees of Amber Charter Schools to order on Wednesday May 14, 2025 at 6:16 PM.

#### C. Check-In

## II. Development Committee

### A. Updates

- The development committee chair shared that they are sending out the save-the-date for our 25th Anniversary celebration, which will go out after Memorial Day, May 28.
  - The formal invite will be sent by June 18.
  
- The development committee chair shared the pricing breakdown.
  - Revenue estimate based on headcount and the different levels of tickets that will be available for purchase.
  - The goal is to reach \$130,000 in revenue (the night of giving would be above and beyond ticket sales).
- The benefits that come with each sponsorship level (the extra perks)
  - achievement & community (is tax-deductible)
  - responsibility
  - honesty
  - respect
- The development committee asked board members to buy one ticket at \$500 or two community tickets; they were also suggested to purchase or sell \$1,500.
  - As of Today, we've raised \$25,000, and an additional \$22,500 is committed but not yet received (pledges).
  
- Planning for the night of
  - We want to ensure that we have events and performances that evoke emotions to encourage people to donate.
  
- Reviewed the draft flow of the night.
  - Student Swag: A video highlighting the students and the program.
  - The board discussed how we should consider the number of families we have impacted to demonstrate our collective impact.
  - Tap into Amber Stars from college - right now tapping into Amber stars who have been with us since 5 years old and now in upper middle school to show a "then and now" type video (telling a story year over year to see the evolution of our students over time)
  - Do we have contacts with anyone from the earliest days of Amber who has graduated from college that we can connect with from EH? The Co-CEO &

Chief People Officer has a few and some teachers who have been there a long time.

- The board stated they want to have at least 1 story that encapsulates the crowd, they discussed the importance of this for our event.
- Julian's auction
  - Auctioning items from Lin-Manuel Miranda.
- Paddle raise
  - The board questioned if this is something we will have?
  - They need to discuss the logistics front and back of house. Brad would support with it. They think it does help encourage others, as they feel motivated to donate and see others doing so.

### **III. Finance Committee**

#### **A. Budget for SY 25-26**

- Total enrollment projections for next year are 1,250 students.
  - EH 335
  - KB 750
  - IW 165
  - Co-CEO explained that we are taking a more conservative approach to enrollment numbers to hopefully hit targets.
- Co-CEO explained our enrollment currently.
- We are at 1,166 for enrollment
  - We would be 84 more students next year with EH 7th, and us opening 2 more cohorts for 5th and 6th at KBMS.
  - We are budgeting 30 fewer students for next year than this year.
  - Expect \$19,936 per pupil (about 4.5% more than this year) - not yet finalized by the state but will be soon.
  - The majority of our funding comes from state funding per pupil; federal funding is another source of our funding, as is the Title I grants and meals reimbursement.
- Major expense is personnel - 5% variance from this year to next year, and most is for instructional staff for next year moving up a step,
- Other expenses
  - Expansions of grades
  - Textbooks and materials
  - Administrative needs like insurance, etc;

- Facilities like leases at KB and IW
- End of this year, \$167,000 deficit due to a decrease in students.
- Next year is projected to have a surplus of \$678k . We made some restructuring at the school level and network level in order to be sustainable for the next school year.
- Board Secretary asked if we have a Plan B for Title 1?
  - Co-CEO responded that so far the funding is not at risk, but if the Title 1 funding doesn't come in, the good thing is that our staff is not relying on that (it's only about 3% of our budget). It's more like a supplement to what we already have. Which is about \$500k from Title 1 funding.
- Board Chair asked if we had any marketing dollars?
  - Co-CEO responded that we do those are under indirect/other expenses.
- Capital
  - We are hoping none for IW or KB, but for EH we do need to install classroom lockers for middle school.
  - Also, the main water break for EH (total fixed assets are \$129K).
  - We always capture the mortgage for EH each year.

Li'Esha Garcia made a motion to pass the budget.

Brad Olsen seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### IV. Co-CEO Report

##### A. Monthly Update

- Co-CEO asked the board if they saw the Pix11 clip with Mr. G?
  - Most did get to see it. She will share the link if anyone wants to see it. Students and families were really excited to see it.

- State testing this year
  - All grades and subjects to be computer-based testing.
  - Glows:
    - We noticed students using the technical tools, highlighting, covering the text, just in general feel comfortable using the tech (this was a big fear from earlier this year that students wouldn't be familiar so to see them be successful helped ease our collective anxieties).
    - Taught students "ELA thinking jobs" and how to tackle different genres of ELA texts.
    - Using scrap paper to pull out the important parts of their thinking jobs and show their work in math.
    - Teachers felt like they set up their students to be prepared; the test felt fair and what was expected to see (content-wise).
    - Mock testing and the platform of LinkIt, which is super similar to the state test, really helped prepare for the state test days (it felt familiar).
    - Students were pacing themselves throughout the test.
    - Morale and confidence in the classroom were evident.
  - Grows:
    - Needed more scrap paper - scrambled to find the available extra.
    - Day 2, we saw students slightly more anxious - more extended responses for typing and showing their thinking (fewer multiple choice), were a bit more intentional; also, Day 2 math, there were multi-step problems which tripped students up.
    - 7th and 8th tested well into the afternoon compared to younger students on Day 2, which makes sense since their extended responses require more
- Principal Update for EH
  - Hired the EH principal, and she will be at the June board meeting so all can meet her and she can share; she will also be joining Friday for the leadership retreat alongside the Co-CEO.
  - Co-CEO gave a shout-out to the Chief People Officer for making it happen before the deadline and all the hard work she put in.
- Co-CEOs attended the NY CEO charter school growth fund dinner.
- They stated how great it was to be amongst other CEOs; 2 of the CEO's were saying goodbye too so nice to say goodbye in person; nice to be in a room to discuss how we all can collaborate around advocacy initiatives.
- Co-CEO thanked Josefina for being a great support in the finance department during Masiel's leave. Masiel is back.
  - She also thanked the broader team (including principals) for their help during the budget planning meetings and for finalizing it.
- Joey and Kirsys have met with CDFI's for the refinance work with IW; we want to come back to the finance committee with the top 2-3 people who want to move forward with.

- Facilities
  - IW
    - We are close to the end (delayed for a week b/c of the rain - first week of June); we started removing the scaffolding in the back and are now moving to the front of the building to be done
      - Padding on the terrace needs to be fixed along with other cleanup, so the terrace might not be up for June, but definitely by next school year.
  - KBES
    - Submitted RFP for new cleaning company; EH - submitted RFP for the facade work that needs to happen - we're not rushing to do it, and we have submitted for a congressional grant, and the repair would help increase the value of the building.

## V. Board Chair Report

### A. Monthly Report

- The board chair had a question about AI in the school.
  - The use of AI in the classrooms, and wondering if we have an AI policy, or if issues have come up.
  - Co-CEO replied that part of the PD day Friday is to collect some data on how AI is being used by students and staff so we can start to brainstorm ways we can tackle AI in classrooms.
  - Potentially can then get consultants to support us in planning and utilizing this.

## VI. Closing Items

### A. Approve Minutes

John Gutierrez made a motion to approve the minutes from April Board Meeting on 04-09-25.

Luina Munoz-BlueSpruce seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

### B. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 7:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Gutierrez